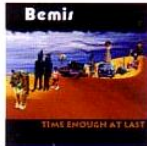


Bemis
TIME ENOUGH
AT LAST
Self Released
★★★★☆

Superlative vocal and acoustic efforts from a much underrated duo

Made up of just Gareth Howells and Ritchie Leo who write all the material on this ten track debut album, this duo from the South of England have some of the sweetest and purest sounding harmonies I have ever had the pleasure to experience.

Slogan Song begins quite sparse and in a tamer spirit on acoustics than other tracks on this album but this somewhat lack of overpowering instrumentation does not by any means harm this tune's overall feeling as it offers a social commentary whilst sung in the lad's own style which seems to impress once the first note has been sung. The picking to *Brilliant Fire* can be best described as knockout which, along with both Gareth's and Ritchie's impressive efforts on vocals, have surely been adored by past audiences and certainly will occur once again in future gigs. On the vast majority of songs, Gareth takes the lead on vocals but when the opportunity arises for Ritchie to flex his vocal muscles he grabs the harmony bull by the horns and relishes every second. This is most evident on *There's More To Come*, with Gareth by no means giving a poor performance on support. The picking is by all means worth a mention, as the combination of their acoustic efforts and singing is quite special. With regular gigging happening across the country but concentrating more in Southern England, I urge you to attend one of their gigs. Having seen them appear at the 2009 Southsea Folk and Roots Festival, they sure are a delight to see. **RH**
www.myspace.com/bemisuk



Ben Bullington
WHITE
SULPHUR
SPRINGS
★★★★

Polished singer-songwriter with much to say lyrically about the world we live in

Bullington eases into his sophomore release with the gentle night-time portrait *Ring Around the Moon*. Set in a diner booth the down-on-his-luck, much-travelled narrator in the ensuing and wistful *Ain't Found It Yet* relates how: 'I've been all over this country, but I ain't found it yet.' Posing serious questions about life, and how people choose to live it, Rodney Crowell and Bullington duet on *Toe The Line*—'Am I messenger for the king's liars, Am I sneaking round putting out other men's fires, Do I celebrate more than I criticise, Do I find my own truth, do I toe the line.' In the latter, Bullington recalls a time when honesty was a valued currency and an American could hold his head high and proudly call himself a liberal.

In the autobiographical *Born In '55*,



the setting is a barroom. Bullington nails how during the 1960s the western world lost its way—'At that point three great men were dead and Nixon left alive.' This reflection upon the turmoil-filled decade includes mention of Vietnam and Hendrix at Woodstock. Opening lines in the charming, waltz-paced love song *No Matter How Many Times*—'I liked the way you looked in jeans, They fit like July and bare feet'—captures that moment when everything changes. Ben's acoustic guitar and voice are ably supported by violin and cello on the latter. For the narrators—a husband and wife—life with their kids goes on, but an undercurrent of unease is woven into the fabric of the deceptively lyrical *Twangy Guitars*. In the closing segment there's a deal of good news and joy for all. Anyone whose life has been touched by life-threatening illness will take comfort from this genuinely unsentimental portrait. As for *White Sulphur Springs*, it's in Montana and has been Virginia-bred Bullington's home in recent time. On the plaintive gospel-tinged album closer *I'm A Stranger* Ben is vocally supported by Tracy Nelson, while the lyric focuses once again on America and its politics, at home and abroad.

The aforementioned guest appearances apart, the only support players on this ten-song set of Bullington originals are Fats Kaplin (pedal steel, violin, mandolin, accordion), George Bradfute (bass, electric guitar, cello) and one-time Sony music executive Joanne Gardner (vocals). While music has been a constant undercurrent, Ben has been an oil field geologist, doctor and in recent times, a performing musician. There's a subtle and gentle grace to this man's music that warrants your hearing. **AW**
<http://benbullington.com/>

Billy Irvine
WEAR A
NUMBER
Self Released
★★★★★

Extraordinary material which has echoes of Paul Simon running through its veins

With this his second album, UK singer-songwriter Billy Irvine has released a quite sublime albeit short EP album consisting of six songs that highlight his ability to pick an electric guitar like a man on a mission as well as write some superb songs that seem to hark back to the days of Hendrix and Denver in their prime.

Evening Hill has an all round quality that really is superb. Billy hits the musical G-Spot on more than one occasion with pulsating efforts on background instrumentation with the electric guitar picking towards this song's conclusion quite beautiful to say the least. With a peach of a start, *Bring It Home* seems to sound like so many artists that it's quite outstanding. Whether it's Paul Simon or if it is Hendrix, this self-penned tune certainly doesn't harm Billy's credentials as a very fine musician who should be playing in the big leagues and in some of the world's larger stadiums. *Right Some*



Wrong seems to invite its audience to continue listening as it seems to grab you by the cochlea which in turn gives you no urge to leave this track before its eventual demise. It seems to merge many different genres together towards the creation of a potential classic that has definite radio possibilities; a cracker of a track which I know many will love even after hearing it for the first time.

Wowing the crowds at the 2009 Southsea Folk & Roots Festival, this artist is one person who is just as good live as he is on an album. An exceptional talent who must be heard to be believed as no review can ever summarise Billy's genius. **RH**
www.billyirvine.co.uk
www.myspace.com/billyirvinemusic

Boulder
Acoustic
Society
PUNCHLINE
Nine Mile Records
★★★☆☆

Wacky quartet with varied musical genres all wrapped up in their own on-the-edge style

The packaging that accompanies this release borders on the ridiculous. Quite frankly, 'What was the point?' The main card structure, coupled with lenses can be made into a 3-D viewer and is accompanied by five inserts, most double-sided, that portray this quartet together and individually. Once seen ... enough said. The separate backing card contains instructions for building the viewer. To prevent the foregoing contents spilling out they're housed in a clear cellophane re-sealable packet. The viewer totally works, and the band's fifth disc is housed in a compartment on the underside of the packaging.

So what of the music made by this quartet, is it as frivolous as the packaging OR does it actually possess merit? In terms of instrumentation the Society features accordion, keyboards, drums, violin/viola, upright bass, guitar, lap steel, ukulele, banjo and cornet. Album opener *We Tried* lyrically attempts humour but in truth, sounds contrived. An inauspicious start, the ensuing *Until Then* is a straight arrow love song. Launched by a martial drumbeat, the vocally frantic and angry, *Give It Away* takes a side swipe at the American government's policies at home and abroad. In terms of tempo, *Frog Pajama Waltz* is precisely that. Since Klemzer is the stylistic undercurrent of *So Confused*, I felt uneasy regarding the lines: 'She stutters in Sunday school, got Hitler's brain in a jar, She turns her tricks on Monday's by the new family car.' Maybe I'm the one that needs to lighten up? I feel there should still be (some) boundaries...

There are snatches of blues, folk, gospel, indie and world music in the Society's oeuvre. Based on evidence delivered on the fifteen-song PUNCHLINE, this wacky foursome knows exactly how to abandon musical caution in word and melody. **AW**
<http://boulderacousticsociety.net/>
<http://www.myspace.com/boulderacousticsociety>



Caroline
Herring
GOLDEN
APPLES OF
THE SUN
Signature Sounds
Recording Co.
★★★★★

Herring's fourth release is a seamless mix of originals and covers

On *GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN*, Herring is at turns radically new and same old same old. Same old, since she appears to love producers who are accomplished guitarists. John Inmon helmed her 2001 debut, Robert Earl Keen sideman Rich Brotherton produced the ensuing pair. Six-string wizard David 'Goody' Goodrich fulfils the role here. The Inmon and Brotherton discs were created in Texas, *GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN* was recorded at Signature Sounds studio in Pomfret, Connecticut at the turn of the year. Not only was this Mississippi girl on unfamiliar Northern ground, the air temperature was a tad cooler. Think snow, deep snow. A coterie of session players contributed to Herring's previous albums, while support on *GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN* is pretty much down to Goody's acoustic strung instruments plus his occasional input on piano. As a result, Herring's voice, banjo and guitar are front and centre as never before. Not averse to recording covers this twelve-song disc features five of them. As I said, new and old.

Having, so far, name-checked male associates past and present, here are the ladies and those covers. *See See Rider* was first recorded by Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey back in 1924, *Cactus Tree* covered Joni Mitchell's 1968 debut *SONG TO A SEAGULL*, while six years earlier Judy Collins included William Butler Yeats' *Song Of The Wandering Aengus* on her sophomore album, *GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN*. Ann Castro adds a backing vocal to *Long Black Veil*, a song co-written by the late Marijohn Wilkin and Danny Dill. Cyndi Lauper will forever be associated with her 1986 number one pop hit single *True Colors*, a song penned by Tom Kelly and Billy Steinberg. Adopting a distinctly softer approach Herring owns the latter song, the Yeats arrangement is pleasingly unique while Herring's rendition of *Cactus Tree* strays close to Mitchell's original.

Time for a few thoughts on some of Herring's new creations—*Tales Of The Islander*, a song that took years to complete, was inspired by the life of Walter Anderson, the Mississippi artist/naturalist. Launched by a descriptive pastoral portrait *A Turn Upon The Hill* the narrator goes on to enquire: 'Can you see inside my soul' and 'Can you see inside me.' *The Dozens* is upbeat and melodic, while Herring's words concentrate on life and racial tolerance. *Abuelita*, a Spanish word that translates as 'grandmother', is a tender portrait of her maternal relative. The closing songs, respectively, *The Great Unknown* and *The Wild Rose*, draw upon the world of novelists and poets. Dante's *DIVINE COMEDY* and the trials life throws in our path is



...the new releases

Katy Lied ECHO GAMES

Independent

★★★★☆

Echo Games proves that Katy Lied could re-invent themselves time and time again and it would just keep getting better—not to be missed album of my year!!

Katy Lied released a single *Late Arrival* last year that graced the BBC Radio 2 airwaves and was followed by an album of the same title. *Maverick* reviewed the album in November 2008 calling it: 'Fine Americana music with a 1970s Southern California sound.' However, the band that you may or may not recollect was fronted by Dan Britton, who had left the band to concentrate on solo projects when they started focusing on the second album release. Now returning to our airwaves with ECHO GAMES, Katy Lied is fronted by Katie Harnett and includes the rest of the band that we knew from last year including chief songwriter/guitarist Duncan Hamilton, bassist Ian Thomson and drummer Paul Burgess. Produced by Nigel Stonier, most of the songs are written primarily by Duncan Hamilton but also sees Hamilton in collaboration with Dai Smith (ex-Stories member), Thea Gilmore and their producer Stonier.

This is an immense release, featuring a wide range of content and some marvellous musicianship that often focuses the record on Katie's vocals and the lyrical content that is impeccably toned and well-crafted. The opening track, also titled *Katy Lied* is a story about a girl called Katy and her partner and their many shattered dreams stating 'Katy tried, but Katy lied.' With a rock-pop tone that is both catchy and wonderfully tuned to the current popular market, I think it's such a shame that so many have no idea about this band. *Mr Vertigo* takes on the same California country-rock sound that was evident in the previous album, but fronted by Katie brings in a Sheryl Crow sound that wasn't previously possible. The guitar playing throughout this record is tremendous as are all of the musicians featured. *When It Rains* takes on a less-is-more sound to open and then moves forward with a gritty grunge rock style that still encompasses that Americana tone. *Echo Games* the title track has to be one of my favourite tracks on the album—it's the pinnacle of the release hearing the entire band somewhat out of their comfort zone creating something that is both eerie and progressive. Slide guitar and distorted electric, manipulating the sound with synthesisers, creates a haunting background canvas upon which the vocals just build. The rest of the album carries such variety in both vocal and instrumental content. *Watch This Space* and *Sun Comes Out* are two tracks that must be heard and enjoyed from the latter part of this record. I truly cannot offer enough praise to this release—I only received it yesterday and already I've listened to it ten times over at least! **LB**

www.katylid.com



the inspiration for the former, while, named after a Wendell Berry poem, Caroline's love ode *The Wild Rose* employs the words of Berry and Chile's Pablo Neruda.

Radiant acoustic hues and words that require deliberation pervade Herring's fourth. **AW**
www.carolineherring.com
www.myspace.com/carolineherring

Chip Taylor YONKERS NY

Train Wreck

Records

★★★★

All about the young Voight boys and how Jamie became Chip Taylor

An eleven-song cycle, YONKERS NY finds Taylor in autobiographical mode. The lyrics came the Voight brothers as they traverse their pre-teen and teen years, and how Chip, in adulthood, became a musician/gambler. Actor Jonathan Vincent 'Jon' Voight is the eldest, followed by world class volcanologist/geologist Dr. Barry Voight and musician James Wesley 'Jamie' Voight aka Chip Taylor.

With \$10 stolen from his father—he left an IOU—in the opening song *Barry Go On (Put Yourself On The Mountain)* the eight year old induces his baby brother to explore the world beyond the Voight home. The punch line—Barry, already a rock collector, was too big to explore a 'cave' in the nearby Mile Square Wood, so guess who was conned into the underground world that day? The boys and their father Elmer, a golf club pro who for many years convinced his kids that he was an FBI agent, appear in the ensuing *Charcoal Sky*. In addition to club and ball, *Gin Rummy Rules* reveals that Elmer possessed other skills—'I live the life of a gambler that's my shame' then he adds: 'I take more than I give most nights.' Jamie confides learning mathematics while watching his

father gamble.

The effect of the mid-1950s movies *Blackboard Jungle* and *Rock Around The Clock* on American teens was life-changing and *Hey Jonny (Did You Feel That Movie)* recalls that era. While mainly referencing the gambler Jamie was to become, *Without Horses* is also a tender love song by dint of the line: 'What would I do without horses and you.' There's also a sly reference to his 1976 album *SOMEBODY SHOOT OUT THE JUKEBOX*. *Bastard Brothers*, the YONKERS NY centrepiece, finds Jamie reveal how his pre-teen fiddle—his brothers hated hearing it—and ukulele, led to playing guitar in a high school country band, a deal with an 'old black record label' and life as a songwriter. There's more of Jamie's early life as a musician in *Piece Of The Sky* and *Saw Mill River Road*. Propelled by a boogie woogie piano, *Yonkers Girls* is all teen testosterone, and the album closes with a bittersweet tribute to *Yonkers NY*.

YONKERS NY is a double disc set—on one the songs include Taylor's narrations, the other features the songs alone. There's also a thirty-two page booklet with the lyrics, Chip's recollections, plus photographs of Yonkers NY and the Taylor family. The support players include John Platania, Kendel Carson and Greg Leisz. YONKERS NY is engagingly melodic, insightful, poignant and occasionally downright humorous. <http://www.trainwreckrecords.com/>
<http://www.myspace.com/chiptaylorsolo>

Cliff Eberhardt 500 MILES

Red House Records

★★★★☆

Fine singer-songwriter with the cream of Texas musicians and a slight blues edge

This album was recorded in



Texas at Blue Rock Artist Ranch and Studio, and produced by owner/musician Billy Crockett. Blue Rock is an amazing multi-media facility that I visited for one of their monthly concerts the week before Cliff began cutting this album. Do yourself a favour and check their web site. Mention Blue Rock to touring American singer-songwriters familiar with this facility and most immediately begin drooling. True. OK—commercial over.

The first track apart, Eberhardt is supported by the cream of Central Texas players. They include Mike Hardwick (guitar), Colin Brooks (resonator guitar, lap steel), Joel Guzman (accordion), Glenn Fukunaga (bass), Chris Maresh (upright bass) and Rick Richards (drummer), while Karen Mal supplies background vocals on a few cuts. Accompanying his voice with acoustic and slide guitars, Cliff opens with a slow, stunning rendition of Hedy West's almost fifty-year old *500 Miles*. Now considered an American folk classic, West constructed the song from fragments of a melody that an uncle sang to her back in post WWII Georgia. The only other cover in this collection is John Hiatt's almost two-decade old *Back Of My Mind*, the tale of a confused youngster who finally finds redemption in adulthood.

Having opened with one road song, Eberhardt closes his eighth collection by revisiting *The Long Road*. Written two decades ago when he toured Italy with Richie Havens, it became the title of Eberhardt's 1990 debut album, which was released by Windham Hill Records. On the love ode *I Want To Take You Home With Me*, Crockett's mandolin and Guzman's accordion weave a dreamy backdrop, the narrator in *Lonelyville* replays for the listener his seemingly never-ending run of bad luck, while the disconsolate *Break A Train* narrator sums up love lost in

the lines: 'You can break a heart, But you never learn to like the sound.' In terms of presentation Cliff leans toward the blues on much of this album, and the memorably melodic *Easy Street*, complete with finely restrained vocal support from Mal, is one of this collection's standouts. **AW**
<http://www.cliffeberhardt.net/>
<http://www.myspace.com/cliffeberhardt>

Deadstring Brothers SAO PAULO

Bloodshot

Records-B5159

★★★★☆

Real whiskey

soaked rocking

country/blues music

When reviewing their last album I wrote that they had found their ideal sound which was a country-rock version of the Stones, and that is still very evident on this new release. I also added that by using the vocals of Masha Marjeh more helped to off-set the highly emotive voice of Kurt Marschke, but sadly since then Masha has left the full band although she still adds backing vocals on the rocking'n'rolling *Houston* with great boogie woogie piano from Ross Westerbur, plus the wonderful ballad *Adalee* on which Kurt's voice is majestic. Masha also duets with Kurt on the superb closer *Always A Friend Of Mine* which is proof of just how damn good they are singing together.

Other members of the band are long-time drummer E Travis Harrett, and brothers Spencer (electric guitar, pedal and slide guitar) and Jeff Cullum (bass) who all help to form a good musical nucleus to help vent Kurt's strong emotionally charged vocals. Kurt's voice soars as much as the tremendous slide guitar solo on the swampy rocker *The River Song* with additional organ accompaniment from Chris Codish. The ballad *It's A Shame* is another perfect vessel to showcase Kurt's powerfully emotive voice, and he excels even more on the truly excellent *The Same Old Rule* on which his hurting vocals send shivers up your spine.

This is heart-wrenching, bulldozing, guitar laden, in-your-face country-rock with a swamp-infested bluesy feel helped along with nerve-jangling vocals and fiddle, pedal steel, slide and electric guitars plus a rhythm section of the highest quality. **DK**

www.myspace.com/deadstringbrothers



Deborah Bonham DUCHESS

Rhino (ATCO)

452476

★★★★☆

Powerful vocals

assisted bloody

marvellously by her stupendous band.

This being her third album, this issue is testament to the fact that the Bonham family are just a brood of awesomeness that continues to release some quite downright sublime music. Every music fan knows the sad fate of brother John, but his younger sister has released

